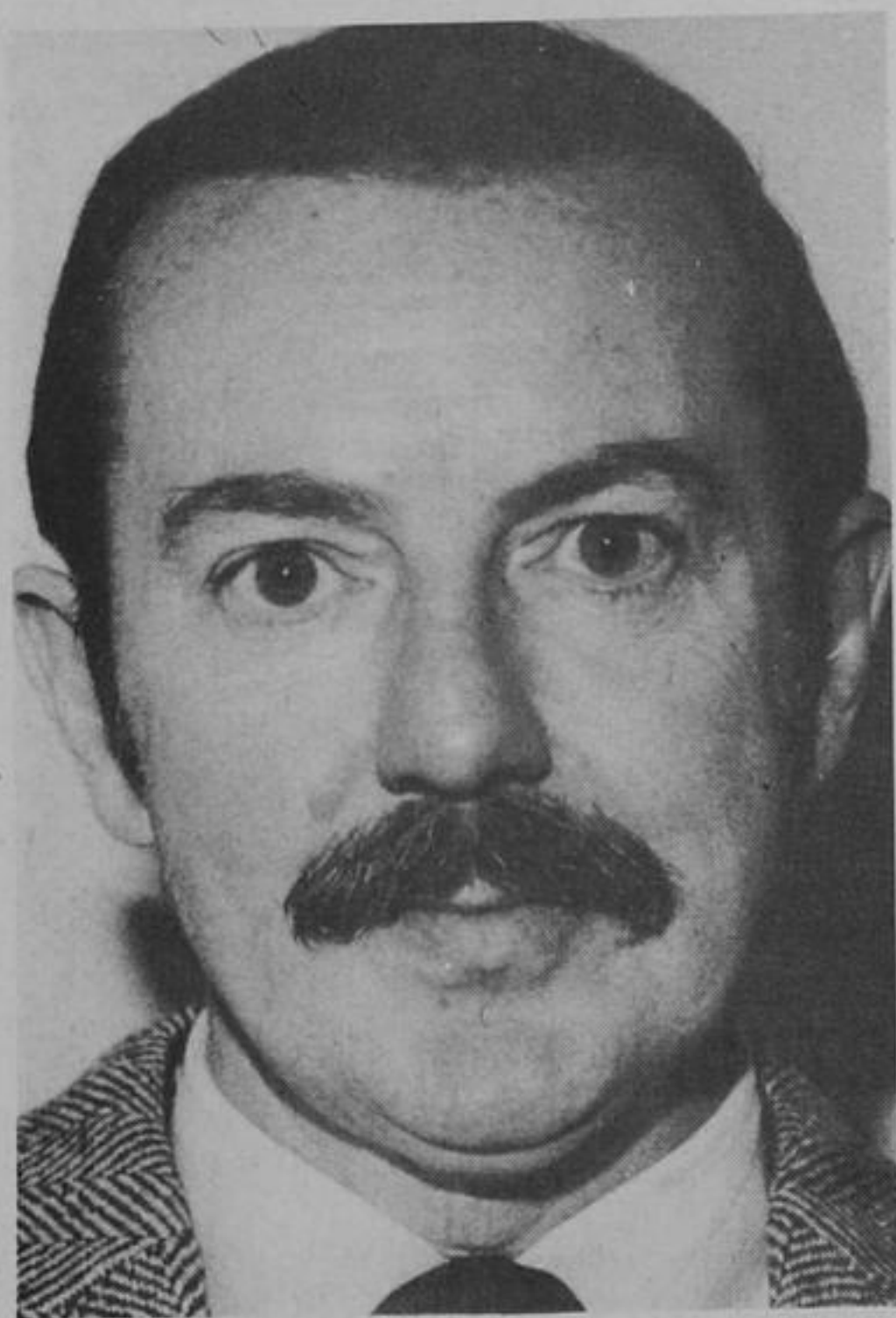


# Letters

## Viewpoint writer gets failed



Professor Ron Shephard  
...charitable, easy marker



Columnist Jim Irving  
...myopic view of education

Dear editor:  
In the Nov. 10 edition of The Liberal, Regional Viewpoint columnist Jim Irving, demonstrated once again his myopic view of education.

In his column, "Trustees must be tough", he complained Sam Chapman, Dorothy Zajac, and "a few others" were wasting time trying to define what the "basics" are rather than giving us "instant implementation".

He even accused Education Director Chapman of hypocrisy in "pretending" not to know what the "basics" are.

I address myself to columnist Irving:  
Mr. Irving, if Sam Chapman is hypocritical in his approach to the problem of the "basics", then so are thousands of intelligent educators across North America who are trying to sort out what the "basics" really are.

If you know, then please let the rest of us in on the definition.

You complain in your column, but you don't attempt to define them. You imply, however, that you know.

Let's assume, Mr. Irving, that somehow you learned the "basics".

After all, you are a writer, and writers know all about those things, don't they? Or do they?

I have marked your column, Jim, following the "basic" rules of grammar and composition found in most standard texts in use in the "good old days".

I'm sorry, Jim, but even though I am a charitable man and an easy marker, I have been forced to give you a failing mark on your "essay".

It contains far too many errors to list and explain here, but let me cite some of the most egregious blunders. (I am adhering, of course, to the "basic" rules in marking your work.)

1) — "One has to be somewhat ruthless, too, so those long hours don't..."

This is not too serious an error, Jim, but Fowler tells us that a clause of result or purpose should be introduced by "so that" not "so".

I am pleased you have placed commas before and after "too" in this sentence. But why didn't you do it in the first sentence of the third paragraph?

"Of course that very fact could go against them, too but that's the chance both they and you take?"

A printer's error?

2) — "Personally, I don't think it's the job of the high schools..." This is a common error, Jim, called tautology or needless repetition.

"Personally" and "I" express the same idea. Or perhaps you used "Personally, I..." as the opposite of "Impersonally, I..."?

3) — "Public school is where they should really be drilled home."

That's some sentence you have there, Jim boy!

Since you were establishing a contrast between high school and public school, the adverb "really"

should have been placed before the word "where". That's a minor problem, however, compared to the serious "basic" error in your sentence.

Jim, years ago any student well versed in the "basics" could have told you that you were guilty of the old "is-when, is-where" error.

This was one of the "basic" errors listed by the Ontario department of education.

Tsk! Tsk! Surely you know that the copula verb "to be" cannot be followed by an adverb clause of place or time.

My God, Jim, that's as "basic" as you can get! By the way, that makes three "basic" errors in one short two-sentence paragraph.

4) — "High school, more or less guaranteed you those dimensions, because that's what it was sitting there waiting to do..."

You do have problems with the "basic" use of the comma, don't you, Jim? Your use of the comma is often referred to as the "rabbit in the snow" technique.

Any student of the "basics", however, knows it is a serious punctuation error to use a comma to separate the subject of a sentence ("High school") from its predicate ("guaranteed") in this manner.

He might even question your use of the word "dimensions" in this sense. The metaphor of the high school "sitting there waiting" is also rather interesting.

5) — "On the other hand, let's hope the latter doesn't always make out that they need to."

Jim, your concluding sentence defies analysis. At first glance, it seems to contain one of the most "basic" errors made by students today.

The "latter" seems to refer to "they" in the previous sentence. If so, it is plural and should not be followed by the singular verb "doesn't".

If it refers to the "old guard", it is singular. But then the corresponding pronoun in the sentence should be "it", not "they".

Giving you the benefit of the doubt, "they" may refer to the "newcomers" in the previous sentence. However, if it does...

It gets complicated, doesn't it? In any case, your sentence is wrong: it is either grammatically incorrect or so convoluted in structure it is ambiguous and misleading.

Your error, Jim, is the kind of mistake up with which many purists will not put.

If my previous sentence sounds odd, the reason is I have tried to avoid ending it with a preposition.

You may not realize it, but your article ends with a preposition. Don't be silly, you say. Who cares?

Well, Jim boy, one of the "basic" rules that some people want to return to is, "Never end a sentence with a preposition".

Here I end my criticism.

I could continue, Jim, pointing out other solecisms and rhetorical infelicities in your column.

I could point out at least two spelling errors, but they could be printer's errors, not yours.

I could comment on your indiscriminate use of the dash as a punctuation device.

I could point out how you are frequently guilty of what Fowler calls "anacoluthon", switching from one syntax track to another in the middle of a sentence.

But what's the use? It's a futile exercise, isn't it? There is no doubt we must put more emphasis on the "basics", Jim.


Students certainly need help with "basic" skills. For that matter, so do you and I.

But let's realize this is a very complex problem, and not rush in with simplistic solutions that will result in the kind of 18th century prescriptivism exemplified in my grammatical analysis of your column.

Sam Chapman knows we must define the "basics" clearly before we can start teaching them. I know that.

You should know it, Jim.

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**COST:** \$27.75 per couple includes champagne, dinner served after midnight

**ORCHESTRA:** PETE SCHOFIELDS — THE CANADIANS

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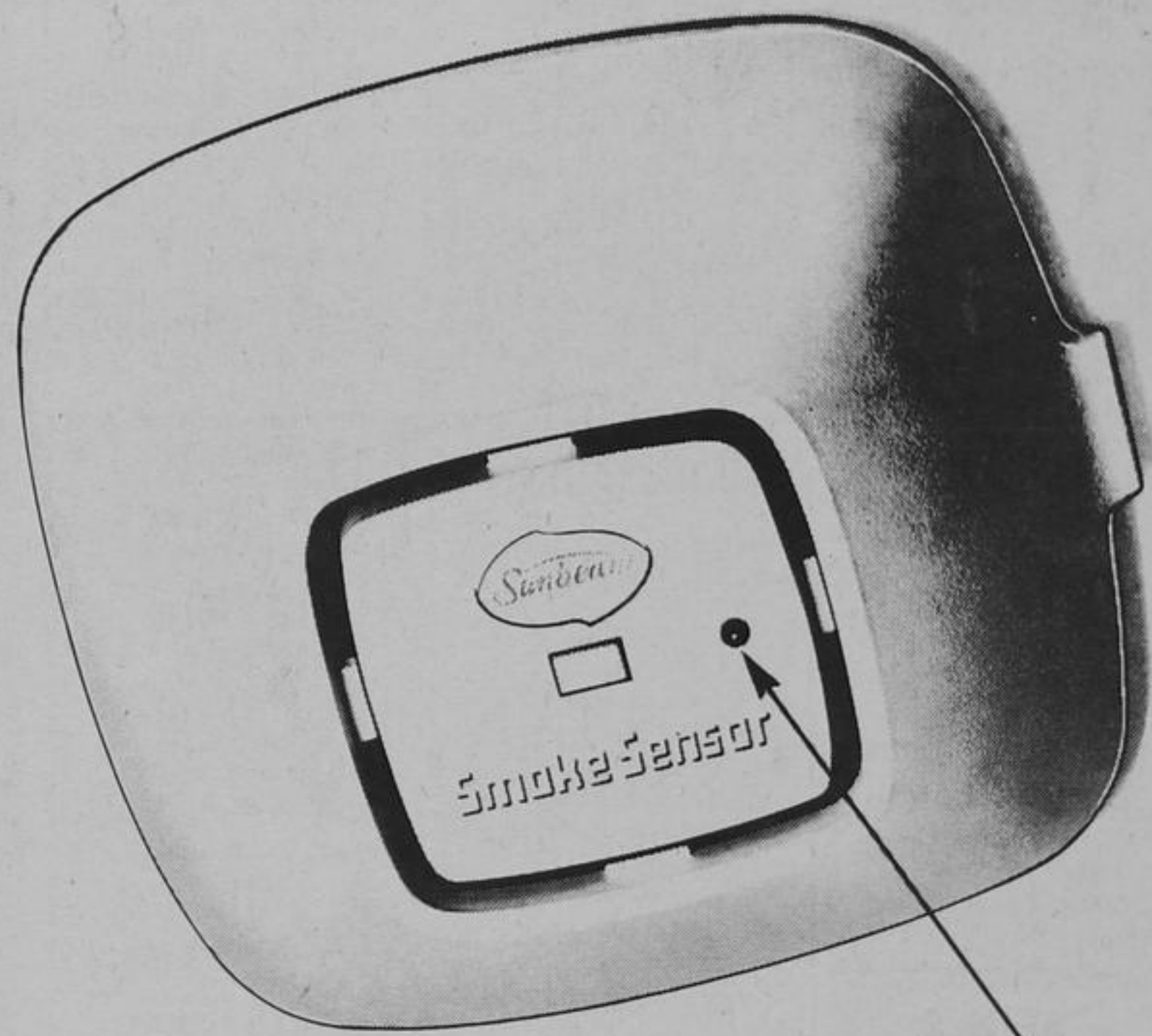
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## NOTICE OF POLL

### TOWN OF VAUGHAN

Notice is hereby given to the Municipal Electors of the Town of Vaughan that an election will be held on

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 6th, 1976**

for the following offices:

Mayor (who shall also serve as a Member of the Council of The Regional Municipality of York);

Five Councillors (who shall serve on the Town Council only);

Two Members to the York County Board of Education. To be elected by Public School Electors; and,

One Member to the York County Board of Education. To represent the Municipalities of Vaughan, King, Aurora, Newmarket, Georgina, East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville. To be elected by Separate School Electors of the said Municipalities.

Every person shown on the Polling List of Electors for the Town of Vaughan will receive a notice of the location of the polling place in which he or she is to vote.

The polls will be opened for the purpose of receiving votes of the electors of the Town of Vaughan at eleven o'clock a.m. and shall continue open until eight o'clock p.m.

### ADVANCE POLLS

Advance Polls Will be Held On

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27th, 1976 and  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29th, 1976**

for the purpose of receiving the votes of the electors of the Town of Vaughan who expect to be unable to vote on polling day in the polling subdivision for which their name appears on the polling list.

### THE ADVANCE POLLS WILL BE AT:

**TOWN OF VAUGHAN  
MUNICIPAL OFFICES  
2141 MAJOR MACKENZIE DRIVE  
MAPLE, ONTARIO**

and will be opened at eleven o'clock a.m. and shall continue open until eight o'clock p.m.

F.G. JACKMAN,  
Clerk,  
Town of Vaughan,  
2141 Major Mackenzie Dr.,  
Maple, Ontario.  
832-2281

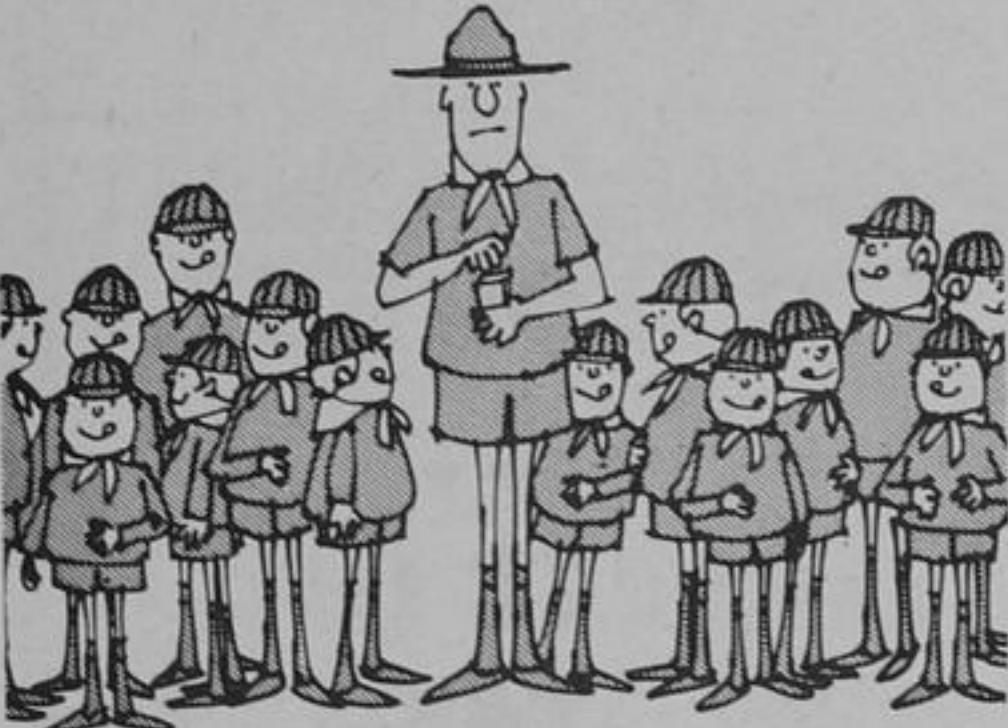
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